

Council on Educational Services for Exceptional Children
Meeting Minutes
March 17, 2010

Members Present

Bob	Atwater	
Sonja	Brown	
Susan	Humbert	
Sally	Hunter	
Sheila	Knapp	
Shary	Maskel	
Ann	Maxwell	
Doris	McCain	
Teresa	Mebane	
Dwight	Pearson	
Lisa	Phillips	
Jana	Plemmons	
Jill	Scercy	
Kathy	Blankenship	for Joe Sutton
Curt	Garland	for Gloria Upperman
Cynthia	Wilson	
Mark	Yost	

Members Absent

Esther	High
Nicole	Jimerson
Cathy	Kea
Felix	Keyes
Linda	Nelson
Laura	Wiley

Visitors

Mike	Corrigan
Cynthia	Daniels-Hall
Eric	Hall
Laurie	Jaegers
Nicole	McWhirter
Brenda	Monforti
Lynn	Rogers

DPI Staff / Presenters

Tish	Bynum
Kate	Neale
Mary	Watson
Ira	Wolfe

Welcome, Review of Agenda, Approval of Meeting Minutes

Sonja Brown, Chairperson, opened the meeting with introductions of members and guests. Chairperson Brown recommended the Council take a few minutes to review December's meeting minutes as well as today's agenda.

The December meeting minutes were approved with edits. Kathy Blakenship provided a correction that she attended for Joe Sutton – not Dwight Pearson – at the December meeting.

Vision for New Assessments

Tammy Howard, Section Chief of Test Development from Accountability Services, reiterated a presentation from the Accountability Conference entitled GPS – Globally Positioning Students. The presentation's focus was to share the current state of accountability and assessments for exceptional children beginning at the national level and then at the state level.

Accountability works very closely with the EC Division and other DPI Divisions regarding assessments. There is also external collaboration, such as with parents, on test specifications.

ACRE – Accountability and Curriculum Reform Effort - looks at NC's assessments and makes recommendations about how to go forward. Based on the recommendations, a framework for change was issued. The Accountability Division is recommended to develop an accountability system; and Curriculum is required to develop content standards. There is also a mandate to reduce the number of assessments.

ACRE minimizes/reduces the emphasis on summative assessments, such as End-of-Grade and End-of-Course tests. ACRE shifts focus from summative assessments to formative and benchmark assessments. Training modules for formative assessments are being developed for pilots this fall. A formative assessment is not a test. For example, when reading a story, the teacher asks questions and makes sure each student absorbed the content. Formative assessments are very frequent, daily or weekly.

Benchmarks are district wide assessments administered throughout the year. Benchmarks include test data. Ideally, benchmarks assess what the student has learned thus far. Benchmarks cannot be administered unless the student has been taught the material. Each LEA needs to develop their benchmark and determine when it is given during the point in delivery. The ideal potential exists that there would be one database of items that each LEA can go to pull items out in order to create their own customized benchmark.

RTTT – Race to the Top – is connected with ACRE. RTTT funds cannot be used for summative assessment – only formative and benchmark assessments. The funds would go to the LEAs and DPI. NC made the final 16 of selected states to receive RTTT funding. RTTT is going on right now as we speak. Top NC officials (Governor Perdue, June Atkinson, Bill Harrison and other key DPI staff members) presented and defended NC's application that was submitted in January. The US Dept. of Education will announce in April the states selected to receive first-round funds for RTTT. A second round of funds will be announced in September.

Another possible source of funds is through competitive federal grants. NC has agreed to participate in at least three out of five. The purpose of the competitive grant consortium is to develop common assessments across several states, instead of 50 different assessments from 50 different states. Comparables between states could easily be made for transferring students.

Another extension of ACRE and RTTT is Common Core Standards. The U.S. is on the only developed country that does not have national content standards. The

international perspective is that the country is to agree on what students need to know. Experts get together and write math K-12 and English K-12 standards. Drafts are available for public comment. Anticipated adoption is in July. Assessments will align to common core standards. The intent is to deliver the best sound education on a state and national level to improve education delivery to students.

The feasibility of the Extend1 assessment for the severe/profound to be administered one on one is being explored. This is very time consuming but necessary for this population. Alternate assessment, Extend2, is not required by federal government. NC and four other states have Extend2. NC may adjust the design of Extend1 and Extend2. Extend1 would include two scorers – the teacher and one other person. This could be revised to a teacher and a proctor. Feedback from a council member also notes not enough score points to give opportunity to show knowledge of partial answers. The teachers of this population should be given the opportunity to prepare stimulus materials for Extend1. The field would appreciate seeing this in the fall in order to work with students that are difficult to test.

Extend2 – it is being discussed to deliver online. Accountability is working on a report to the SBE for April providing status with online assessments and the capacity of LEAs being able to administer assessments online. So many accommodations can be delivered online with Extend2 such as read aloud and large print. Innovative item types that go beyond multiple choice could be delivered online. Online can deliver more innovative and more complex items as well as be more engaging for youth. The high school Extend2 was not approved by the US Dept. of Education peer review because it was deemed not closely aligned with the standard course of study. These scores do not count as AYP; it counts as nonparticipating.

NC Virtual Public Schools

Tracy S. Weeks, Chief Academic Officer for NC Virtual Public Schools (NCVPS), substituted for scheduled presenter Bryan Setser. A previous education motto was all students can learn. Now the motto is all students can learn online. Virtual schools are well equipped to handle the individual needs of students with disabilities. Students and teachers can log on at any time. A teacher can truly individualize/customize the materials, methodologies, etc. to students with disabilities. Assistive technology can also be incorporated. NCVPS currently offers the following service options: classic, standard and AP honors.

Credit recovery programs allow students to self pace. These courses are intended for students to retake previously failed course. There is a pretest for content to reveal areas that were not mastered. Modular credit recovery is not waiting for the student to fail course. In a face-to-face class and the student failed a unit, the student may take content online for just the failed unit while still being in the face-to-face class and continuing on with course content. The idea is to recover missed content and continue to move forward. The mobile method pushes out content learning objects, videos, pod casts, etc. to mobile devices. There is ever increasing content to deliver to various devices. The blended learning environment is the best of face to face and virtual put together. Instruction is moving in same direction of the students, totally aligned to content and students use technology just like in the real world. NCVPS is best practices and 21st

century tools merged together. Course content may be presented virtually and adapted to individual student learning styles.

NCVPS collaborates with content experts, OCS, EC, etc. Collaboration teams work on course design, teaching and funding aspects for each course. Currently, NCVPS teachers and OCS teachers are meeting for a three-course training. Based on a federal Title II audit, some OCS teachers do not meet the federal guidelines of highly qualified teacher certification in content areas. OCS teachers can be face to face with students and students enroll in online math with HQ math teacher online. This scenario meets federal guidelines. January 2011 is the target date for rollout of all OCS courses statewide.

NCVPS is limited to developing high school courses only per state legislation. The Council sees the great potential to utilize NCVPS in elementary and middle school as well.

Information from Council Member

Senator Atwater presented an update to the Council about an educational learning environment within the US Armed Services. In a foreign language class, it has a teacher/student of ratio of 1:5. It's a high-stakes consequential effect of not learning the foreign language material. If the student miscommunicates/offends a foreign national, the consequences could be great for the unit. The "old school" Armed Services way of thinking was you get it and get it now. Senator Atwater advised the Council that now it is evident that even the Armed Services are practicing accommodations for various learning styles of the students and various methods of instructional delivery.

Agency Update and Current Legislation

Mary Watson provided brief overviews on, but not limited to, the following:

- New EC Division staff: Renee Banks, Laura Britt, Paula Crawford
- Title II Audit Update
- EC Division capacity building efforts in the LEAs across the State
- Autism, PBIS, Math, Reading and RtI (Responsiveness to Instruction) activities across the State and the impact these activities have on students with disabilities.

Future Issues

The Council provided the following input on future topics/issues:

- How RtI is impacting students with disabilities
- Foundations training for reading, math – what we need to know.
- Piece on parents for teachers/administrators (ECAC parent trainings) working with parents in small groups to assist children at home. Title I schools are usually parent-oriented. These aspects vary school by school.
- Extended cohort from 4 years to 5 years.

The meeting adjourned.